

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
 OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

ETHAN ALLEN CAPSIZING  
 LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK  
 OCTOBER 2, 2005

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 \* Docket No.: DCA-06-MM-001  
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Interview of: STEVEN GIBBON

National Transportation Safety Board  
 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20594

Monday,  
 November 14, 2005

The above-captioned matter convened, via telephone,  
 pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MORGAN TURRELL

## APPEARANCES:

MORGAN TURRELL

National Transportation Safety Board

LEON LaRUE

National Transportation Safety Board

SGT. WALTER SCHEDEL

New York State Park Police

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# I N T E R V I E W

MR. TURRELL: Okay. Steve, this is Morgan Turrell,  
of the National Transportation Safety Board.

We're conducting an investigation of the Ethan Allen  
Accident on October 2nd.

Present is myself, Morgan Turrell, and to my right.

MR. LaRUE: Leon LaRue (ph.).

MR. TURRELL: And also on the phone is.

SGT. SCHEDEL: Sgt. Walt Schedel, New York State Park  
Police.

MR. TURRELL: And, Steve, if you would, just go ahead and introduce yourself please.

MR. GIBBON: My name is Steven Gibbon, from Signal Mountain, Tennessee. I work in Atlanta as a project manager under contract for Bell South.

MR. TURRELL: Okay. And will you please acknowledge that this is being recorded for accuracy?

MR. GIBBON: Yes, I understand and believe this interview is being recorded.

## INTERVIEW OF STEVEN GIBBON

BY MR. TURRELL:

Q. Okay. Steve, we're conducting an investigation into the Ethan Allen accident. I understand you were in the Lake George area on October 2nd. Is that correct?

A. That's correct.

1           Q.   And could you just tell us briefly what you were  
2   doing in Lake George that day?

3           A.   We were just -- I was doing an October cruise thing.  
4   We were -- I took a trip on the Mohican at -- I believe the  
5   trip started at 1:00 and ended sometime after 4:00 or somewhere  
6   in that area. We were just out sightseeing and just doing a  
7   normal holiday weekend.

8           Q.   Okay. And you were with someone?

9           A.   Yes, I was with my wife, Brenda Gibbon.

10          Q.   Okay. Could you tell us what day you arrived in Lake  
11   George?

12          A.   We arrived in Lake George on October 2nd. We were  
13   staying in Saratoga Springs, and we got there on Friday  
14   evening, and spent the weekend, left out of there early Sunday  
15   afternoon or, no, it was Monday. I think we left on Monday as  
16   a matter of fact.

17          Q.   Okay. And can you tell us a little bit about what  
18   you do for Bell South there, Steve?

19          A.   I'm project manager or time integrator which is  
20   probably a more familiar term with you. I lead the  
21   installation of systems, for Internet systems within Bell  
22   South, little data centers, just lead project teams that built  
23   Internet centers in Birmingham, Charlotte, North Carolina, some  
24   in Jackson, Mississippi.

25          Q.   Okay. Is this your -- was this your first trip to

1 Lake George?

2 A. No. I spent about five years there back in the  
3 seventies. I lived up in that area for a while. I lived in  
4 Latham, New York, for five years and previous to that, I lived  
5 20 some odd years in Connecticut.

6 Q. Steve, could you give us just a rough professional  
7 bio of yourself starting, you know, from high school or college  
8 to current, present day?

9 A. Let's see. I started in 1972 or so with Arthur  
10 Treacher's Fish and Chips in Bison, New York. I was a cook  
11 there, and then became assistant manager, and then manager over  
12 one store, and then assistant supervisor over six stores. That  
13 was over a three year period. After that, I went into  
14 construction work, and I worked for some construction companies  
15 there in the Albany area, and then after that, let's see, went  
16 to Connecticut. I worked down there for several years as a  
17 logger. I did a little farming, a few other odds and ends  
18 things. And then eventually moved down to Tennessee to go to  
19 college. That was around 1982 I believe, somewhere in that  
20 area, graduated with my bachelor's degree from Lee University  
21 in 1987. I went on after that to become like a -- just a  
22 technical integrator type person for the Church is Our Prophecy  
23 World Headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee.

24 Q. Okay. That's me. Never mind. Go ahead.

25 A. Yeah. And after that, I took a position with Union

1 Providence in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Started out as a senior  
2 programmer there, became director of information systems after  
3 about seven years there. I left there around 1999, to go into  
4 consulting. I worked for (indiscernible) in West Union, South  
5 Carolina for a year, doing their quality assurance under Energy  
6 Auto Project, and after that, I contracted with (indiscernible)  
7 around 2000, December 2000 I believe it was and then I went to  
8 work for Bell South, and I've been with Bell South ever since.

9 Q. Okay. Now, Steve, I understand you said you were in  
10 Lake George. Can you give us just a quick -- or not a quick,  
11 but a detailed description of what happened that day and your  
12 cruise on the Mohican, as much as possible from that morning  
13 until the time you went on board and anything you observed?

14 A. Yeah. We got into Lake George around 10:00 or so in  
15 the morning. We just did a few walking things around the  
16 beaches there, stopped at one of the beach side restaurants for  
17 lunch before the trip, and I mean we didn't witness anything in  
18 particular because I didn't know I even saw anything until  
19 Monday night.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Anyhow, we got on the Mohican around 1:00, and I'm a  
22 hobbyist photographer. I brought my digital camera with me,  
23 and just started shooting and shot just about everything I  
24 could. With a digital, you can just keep going and that's why  
25 you see so many photos. I guess there are 300 or so.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. It was just shots of both the north shore, the south  
3 shore and up in the mountains and I just tried to get some  
4 action shots of some of the boats and things and activities  
5 that were going on.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. Then I guess the trip ended at 3:30, 4:00 in the  
8 afternoon, somewhere around there, and I stopped shooting  
9 probably a half an hour before the end of the trip, and didn't  
10 realize I had any photos of anything until Monday night when I  
11 got home and started downloading them off the camera. That's  
12 when I discovered about four shots of the Ethan Allen. So I  
13 thought, you know, that you might be interested in them.

14 Q. Okay. So I understand, the NTSB has these images and  
15 you acknowledge that it's okay for us to use them, and we'll  
16 send you a photographic release for them in the future.

17 A. That will be fine.

18 Q. Okay. Now one of the things that has come up about  
19 these photographs is, we wanted to determine where you were on  
20 the Mohican when you took them.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. Could you just describe basically where you were when  
23 you took, in general most of the photographs or all of them?

24 A. Right. I know where all of them were taken from. I  
25 sent you an e-mail.



1 Q. Yes, I got it. I have it in front of me.

2 A. That should be it. You should have a picture of the  
3 Mohican that I got off their website.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. I was standing on the foremost front part of the boat  
6 by the flagpole.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. So you can shoot right, left and straight in front of  
9 the boat. I got on the boat a little early so I could get up  
10 in a good position.

11 Q. So you remained there the whole trip?

12 A. That's right. That's where everything was shot.

13 Q. Okay. In your e-mail, you reference that you set  
14 your camera time to GPS. Did you have a GPS with you?

15 A. No, I have one in my car.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I discovered it Monday. That's when I checked it.

18 Q. Okay. And the -- when you checked your time stamps,  
19 was that set to Central Time or to Eastern Time?

20 A. It's Eastern Time.

21 Q. Okay.

22 MR. TURRELL: Now, Walter, you want to ask a few  
23 questions?

24 SGT. SCHEDEL: Yes.

25 BY SGT. SCHEDEL:

1           Q.    Steve, this is Walt Schedel with the State Park  
2 Police.  You said that you used to live up here in the Albany  
3 area and you've been to Lake George before.

4           A.    That's right.

5           Q.    Have you ever taken a Lake George tour before?

6           A.    Well, my mother told me I did back when I was a  
7 child, but I don't remember it.

8           Q.    Okay.  So to the best of your knowledge, you've never  
9 been on one of the boats up here either from Shoreline or from  
10 the Steamship Company?

11          A.    No.

12          Q.    Okay.  So this was your first Lake George cruise?

13          A.    Well, my mother said I had been on the Mohican back  
14 when I was a child, but that's the trip I don't recall.

15          Q.    Well, the Mohican has been around a long time.  It's  
16 highly possible.  We're very grateful of the fact that you're  
17 making these pictures available to us and, you know, digital  
18 cameras are a great thing.  When you -- when did you first  
19 realize that you had photos?  Was it Monday you said when you  
20 had downloaded the camera?  Did you think prior to that maybe  
21 you had some?

22          A.    No, I never even thought about it.  I didn't even  
23 know there was an accident on the Lake until Saturday night,  
24 and I just thought, well, this was interesting.  We were up  
25 there all day, and they were talking speculation of the boat

1 creating a wake, and I thought it was possible but, you know, I  
2 don't know. And it wasn't until I started going through them  
3 on Monday night, I guess it was around 6:00 Monday night, I  
4 started downloading them and discovered them, and I thought,  
5 gee, this is incredible. Okay. I mean it's just a fluke. I  
6 mean if you look at the photos, they're shot at a really long  
7 distance and the closest is a 600 millimeter lens. I didn't  
8 even know they were on there. I didn't know I was taking a  
9 picture of it.

10 Q. Yeah, there's a couple of them that are most  
11 definitely a far background shot, and I was going to ask you,  
12 were you aware that you were taking pictures of that particular  
13 boat. One in particular, let me see, where is it here, is when  
14 you were passing the other boat southbound, which was actually  
15 very close up with the --

16 MR. LaRUE: 7191.

17 MR. GIBBON: 191.

18 SGT. SCHEDEL: 191. Yes, there it is.

19 BY SGT. SCHEDEL:

20 Q. I'm looking at very small contact prints here. It's  
21 not easy to pick up.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And that one is probably one of the closest range  
24 ones you did.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And I imagine you must have taken that photo because  
2 of the larger boat. Did you know the smaller boat was there at  
3 the time?

4 A. No, I had no idea.

5 Q. Okay. And you said you were using a 600 millimeter  
6 lens?

7 A. Right. It was a 300 millimeter with a 2X adapter.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So that puts you up close to 600.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I'm not sure how far I zoomed in but probably  
12 close to the full distance.

13 Q. And some of those long distance shots are more than  
14 likely.

15 A. Yeah. It's hard to read on them but if you -- it's  
16 high resolution. So you can't scan -- zoom in a little bit  
17 further.

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 SGT. SCHEDEL: Okay. I don't have any other  
20 questions at the moment, Morgan.

21 BY MR. TURRELL:

22 Q. So, Steve, basically I guess Walter asked a good  
23 question there. To your knowledge, do you recall seeing the  
24 Ethan Allen that day?

25 A. No, I had no idea it was out there.

1 Q. Okay. So when you looked through your zoom -- your,  
2 your lens there, you were really focusing on the other vessel  
3 there, the Horicon I think it was --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- or the Adirondac.

6 MR. TURRELL: Which one was that there, Walt?

7 SGT. SCHEDEL: Let's see. That would be the Horicon.

8 BY MR. TURRELL:

9 Q. So that's what you were focusing on?

10 A. Yeah, that's correct.

11 Q. Okay. Now later on, there's a photograph, I think it  
12 was later on, near Tea Island.

13 MR. TURRELL: Do you have that shot there, Walter, of  
14 the --

15 SGT. SCHEDEL: That would actually be a little  
16 earlier.

17 MR. TURRELL: Earlier?

18 SGT. SCHEDEL: Yeah, because they passed north of Tea  
19 Island -- that would be 7183.

20 MR. TURRELL: 7183.

21 BY MR. TURRELL:

22 Q. Now, Steve, I guess my question here is, can you  
23 recall what the announcements were during this time frame at  
24 all or during this part of the cruise?

25 A. No, I really can't. The speaker that was up in the

1 front wasn't working if I remember correctly.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. It was kind of off in the distance. So I didn't get  
4 a lot of verbiage.

5 Q. Okay. So when you took this 7183, do you recall  
6 seeing the boat when you took this photograph or you were just  
7 taking a shoreline?

8 A. Yeah, I was just taking a picture of the cabins and  
9 the houses up there. That's really the focal point of the --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- picture. The Ethan Allen just happened to be in  
12 it.

13 SGT. SCHEDEL: Okay. I'm sorry, Morgan. I got you  
14 the wrong photo. 7158 is the one up at Tea Island.

15 MR. TURRELL: 7158.

16 MR. GIBBON: And that's -- I don't even recall what I  
17 was focusing on there, looking at that.

18 SGT. SCHEDEL: Well, there's that one house there  
19 kind of hidden behind the tree and --

20 MR. TURRELL: Right.

21 MR. GIBBON: Yeah.

22 SGT. SCHEDEL: Because I know --

23 BY MR. TURRELL:

24 Q. So essentially you were -- this photograph was also  
25 taken from the bow and would you be looking to the port side of

1 this or do you recall?

2 A. The port is the left side?

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. Yes, that's correct.

5 Q. Okay. So when you saw these photographs at home,  
6 what was your impression? When you saw the Ethan Allen, what  
7 was your impression, Steve, when you saw those photographs?

8 A. Well, I was just surprised I had them, but if you  
9 look at 7158, it looks like that boat is leaning a little bit,  
10 and I couldn't tell if it was because the way it was moving  
11 or --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- what.

14 Q. But you didn't actually observe that boat at the  
15 time. You had no idea you had seen it. So --

16 A. No, I had no idea. I didn't even know it was there.

17 Q. Could you describe the Lake conditions that day to  
18 us?

19 A. It was real calm. I mean it was not very windy at  
20 all. It was really a quite calm day. If you look at most of  
21 the photos, there isn't much of a wave on there either. I  
22 don't recall much turbulence at all.

23 Q. Do you recall many -- much boating activity?

24 A. Yeah, there was quite a bit of boating activity.  
25 Come to think of it, there were a few sailboats out. So there

1 had to be some wind for them to use that I would think but it  
2 didn't -- it wasn't gusting winds that I remember. There were  
3 a lot of Ski-Doos. I took several pictures of boats and things  
4 like that that went by.

5 Q. Right. From your -- you're somewhat familiar with  
6 Lake George there. Would you say you went up the western side  
7 of the Lake on the way north or the eastern side?

8 A. Let's see. That I wouldn't know. I don't recall.

9 Q. Okay. Do you recall which side of the -- was it  
10 Canoe Island you passed?

11 A. No, I don't remember which ones are Canoe Island.

12 Q. Okay. You said the tour ended around 3:30 or 4:00.  
13 Is that right?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. And can you estimate how many people were on board  
16 that day, on the Mohican?

17 A. Let's see. Well, the front section where I was at  
18 was pretty full. I mean it was almost at capacity up in the  
19 front. And it was, you know, it was nearly full. I think most  
20 people were outside because it was a nice day. So that's why  
21 it was busy there but as far as numbers, I really couldn't  
22 estimate.

23 Q. Okay. Do you recall looking at the wake of the  
24 Mohican at all from your vantage point?

25 A. No, I was in the front of the boat. So I wouldn't



1 even have an opportunity to see it.

2 Q. Right. Okay. Did you happen to see if there was any  
3 waves, large standing waves on the Lake at all, any sort of  
4 unusual wave conditions?

5 A. No, I don't recall anything like that.

6 Q. Okay. Do you recall any safety announcements made on  
7 the Mohican that day?

8 A. None from my recollection.

9 Q. Of course, you said the speaker was broken you said?

10 A. Yeah, I don't believe the speaker up front was  
11 working.

12 MR. TURRELL: Mr. LaRue, Leon, go ahead.

13 MR. LaRUE: I don't have any questions at this time.

14 MR. TURRELL: Walter?

15 BY SGT. SCHEDEL:

16 Q. Just one question for you, Steve.

17 Approximately how far from shore were you in general?  
18 I mean when you approached some of the points of land that  
19 stick out, is where we're particularly looking at, roughly how  
20 far from shore were you?

21 A. Well, I think 7191 I think was the one where you have  
22 a picture of the Mohican and some right directly after that. I  
23 took straight in front of that boat, and that will kind of give  
24 you some idea where we were on the Lake.

25 Q. Uh-huh.

1           A.    Yeah, like 7192, that's taken with a wide-angle lens.  
2   So we're way out in the middle.

3           Q.    Right.  And that shows you just to the west side of  
4   Canoe Island.

5           A.    Right.

6           Q.    So you basically stayed center of the Lake.  You  
7   weren't hugging the shoreline or anything like that?

8           A.    That's correct.  The only time we got close to shore  
9   is when we got up in the Islands, they did that little thing  
10   where they pulled into a cove up in there.  I'm not sure of the  
11   name of the cove.

12          Q.    Right, Paradise Bay.

13          A.    Yeah.

14          Q.    Okay.  Thank you.

15          A.    Yeah.  But that 7192 was taken like seconds after  
16   7191.  So that will give you a pretty good sense of how far out  
17   we were.

18          Q.    Right.

19                BY MR. TURRELL:

20          Q.    And just looking at 7192, that's looking dead ahead  
21   from your guess there, Steve?

22          A.    That's correct.  I was looking straight ahead of the  
23   boat, at the hills up there.

24          Q.    Okay.  That's a pretty good kind of cross bearing  
25   right there.  We can probably figure out your latitude and so

1 on from that shot I think, but let's just look at 7225.

2 A. Okay. There's the sailboats. So there was some wind  
3 out there, but if you see the waves, they really aren't big.

4 Q. Right. Can you remember where you were taking, the  
5 left side or the center on that shot?

6 A. I think that would be going off to the right-hand  
7 side of the boat.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I think that's the side where I seen the Islands and  
10 things.

11 Q. Okay. So you were -- and when you took photographs,  
12 you say on the right side. Would you say you were taking  
13 perpendicular or were you just kind of like 45 degrees from the  
14 bow?

15 A. It would vary I think each picture. That one to me  
16 looks like it's more off a 45-degree angle to me, just judging  
17 from what I recall of the Islands and stuff. I think that's  
18 the angle that I would have seen that.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. A little further around to the right, you would have  
21 been perpendicular.

22 Q. Right. Right. Okay. Well, I think I have what I  
23 need for now.

24 MR. TURRELL: Walter, you're all set.

25 BY SGT. SCHEDEL:

1           Q.    I just have one other question there for you, Steve.  
2    You mentioned there was other boating traffic in the area, and  
3    some of your photos, it does show boats relatively close by.  
4    7212, in fact, shows a wake that had just passed you, and I  
5    realize that you're using a telephoto lens and it may be  
6    difficult to estimate distances, but did any boat pass within  
7    what you might consider maybe 100 yards or so of the Mohican  
8    during the time of your cruise?

9           A.    No big boats.  We had several like speedboat type  
10   things come fairly close but no really large boats.

11          Q.    And did any of them appear to be having any  
12   difficulty crossing the wake of the Mohican or any waves in the  
13   general area?

14          A.    I didn't see the wake of the Mohican --

15          Q.    Uh-huh.

16          A.    -- because that was behind me, so I don't know what  
17   they might have seen back there.

18          Q.    But these boats, I mean they were conducting normal  
19   boating traffic.

20          A.    Yeah.

21          Q.    They weren't looking like they were in distress or  
22   anything like that?

23          A.    No, not to my knowledge.  I don't recall seeing  
24   anything like that.

25          Q.    And did you observe boats in both directions, you

1 know, traveling in the same direction that you were, passing  
2 close aboard as well as passing the opposite direction?

3 A. Yeah, yeah, I did. There's one, the Sheriff's boat  
4 that went by, I don't recall which number that was, but he went  
5 pretty close. They went pretty fast by the boat. He didn't  
6 seem to have any trouble.

7 Q. All right. Thank you.

8 A. Yep.

9 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Steve, that's all I have for  
10 now. I have no other questions at this time, and I appreciate  
11 your e-mail. I'll be sending you a photo release here probably  
12 today or tomorrow.

13 MR. GIBBON: Okay.

14 MR. TURRELL: And what I'll probably do is just  
15 e-mail the form to you and then if you would just mail it back  
16 to me, that might be the easiest thing to do.

17 MR. GIBBON: That will be fine.

18 MR. TURRELL: And we appreciate your time, and if I  
19 have any questions, we'll call you back.

20 MR. GIBBON: Okay. No problem.

21 MR. TURRELL: Steve, if you just acknowledge this was  
22 recorded, and we'll end the interview?

23 MR. GIBBON: Yeah, I understand it's recorded.

24 MR. TURRELL: Thank you.

25 SGT. SCHEDEL: Thank you, Steve.

1                   (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled  
2   matter was concluded.)  
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           Ethan Allen Capsizing  
                                  Lake George, New York  
                                  October 2, 2005  
                                  Interview of Steve Gibbon

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA-06-MM-001

PLACE:                    Washington, D.C.

DATE:                     November 14, 2005

was held according to the record, and that this is the  
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been  
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

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Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber